



MULTILINGUAL APPROACH IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

It was considered for a long time that learning more than one language at a time hindered a student's academic and intellectual development. Particularly English language learners are expected to leave their native language at the classroom door as it is regarded as an obstacle to the development of the language of schooling and learning in general. It is now proven that being proficient in more than one language has its benefits in an increasingly globalized world.

KEYWORDS: Translanguaging, Pedagogy, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Ethnic, Consensus.

INTRODUCTION

The term multilingual refers to individuals who are able to communicate in two or more languages. It has a profound effect on the brain and improves cognitive and critical thinking skills. Such individuals are known to be faster learners and have better planning, problem solving skills and the ability to perform mentally demanding tasks when compared to monolinguals. Professionals fluent in different languages tend to fit among diverse groups, they are not only comfortable with conversing in different languages but are also more culturally aware.

A Multilingual Classroom And Its Applicability In India

A multilingual classroom considers the learners first language as an asset and as a resource. It encourages more students to participate and actively engage in the classroom without any inhibitions or language barriers. Student's brain function is improved as the mind is challenged to recognize, understand and communicate in multiple languages. They have better memory and develop greater linguistic awareness and critical thinking. Similarly, learning English with the help of another language (the regional or first language familiar to students in the area) could help them to have a better understanding of the concept and to consequently learn faster compared to a traditional English only classroom.

India is home to diverse cultures and ethnic groups, most of the students are able to converse in at least three languages from a young age. This includes the mother tongue or the language that the child learns first followed by the other two languages learnt in their primary schooling. The relationships between different languages and their roles in education have continuously evolved both with micro-level socio-historical processes and also with the dynamics of power structures at the macro-level. The multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural character of India necessitates the inclusion of more than two languages in the curriculum. Education in India has been multilingual at different points in history continuing into the present times. The three-language consensus formulated by the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) highlights the need to blend the local, the national and the international languages and seeks to promote a culturally integrative policy.

Despite learning English along with their first language and another familiar language most of the students in government

and low-cost private schools are barely able to speak, read and write a few simple sentences in English. As these students lack the basic proficiency the direct method of teaching English at the higher level proves insufficient for these students. For these students a multilingual approach to teaching may prove more beneficial. The languages already known to students can help in learning English and developing an understanding of how it works. The connections made between different languages deepens their understanding. Using multiple languages together allows a more natural process of comprehension.

Translanguaging

"Translanguaging" in multilingual communication, refers to learners moving between different languages as one integrated system to connect to a concept. Students already know the meaning of a word in their first language and only need to learn the word. It can be used to compare and contrast the similarities and differences of language to solve the complexity of some words or sounds. This process requires the use of more than one sensory organ (e.g. seeing and hearing) and involves communicating with different resources, e.g. writing, speaking along with the use of gestures. It is an opportunity to allow learners to use what they already have learned in the past from their first language to clarify ideas and concepts of the second language.

"Translanguaging" provides more opportunities for participation in the classroom, students can develop faster when they are able to use familiar, home languages to understand learning content, and show others that they understand. The meaning is conveyed efficiently and the teacher can ensure that concepts have really been grasped, adapting the pace of the pedagogical lesson accordingly. However, there are some short comings to using bilingual or multilingual method of teaching such as students may become over reliant on the other familiar language, they may make different mistakes in structure and pronunciation or they could have different learning styles. It is up to the teacher to ensure that they are learning at the same level and growing from their mistakes.

Assessment In A Multilingual Approach

In a multilingual approach the students should be assessed in a way that their patterns across languages and their metalinguistic background is taken into account. Along with assessing and

evaluating their learning in English language, the assessment should respect and also include their own language's background. This could include multilingual tasks in the assessment and allow for interaction between the students under the teacher's observation. In another proposed method the assessment could be carried side by side for English and the other familiar language, and could include a qualitative and a quantitative component. The quantitative analysis looks at content, structural elements and spelling in the two languages. The qualitative analysis looks at bilingual strategies and distinguishes patterns that go across languages and language-specific approximations.

CONCLUSION

Learning in more than one language can significantly improve our brain functionality. We can learn to interpret our thoughts in multiple ways. But we should carefully choose which languages we can combine with English in our learning experience because different languages mean different ways of processing information, thinking, verbal communication, and culture and no two languages have the same functionality in the real world. It can also be beneficial to our time management as we can learn two languages in a shorter duration of time than it would take to learn individually. It can open doors to more opportunities in life and in interacting with a lot more people than in case of monolinguals.

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